

Characterization of Lingála used by Kinshasa teachers in formal and non-formal education

Bienvenu Sene Mongaba
Universiteit Gent / asbl Mabiki
Senemongaba@yahoo.fr
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Abstract :

Lingála is one of the national languages of Congo and it is spoken in the city of Kinshasa and Brazzaville. Kinshasa students speak Lingála in their daily life, but at school French is the language of instruction, even if the law provides for the use of both Congolese languages and French as languages of instruction. However, due to the poor command of French by students, in fact over 80 % of teachers in formal schools also use Lingála to explain lessons. Our work has already shown (Sene Mongaba 2011 b) that this is a case of diglossia where French is used as language of writing and Lingála as language of oral activities (explaining the lesson). On the other hand, in non formal schools, teachers generally use Lingála as the sole language of instruction.

In our study we characterize the variety and the register of Lingála, which is in contact with French, used by teachers in both formal and non formal education. To extract data in our corpus, we used the software Unitex.

We argue that the oral language production of teachers constitutes the initial point of departure in the preparation of lessons in Lingála. In this respect, it would then be possible and beneficial to create or reinforce scientific terminology and produce writing documents (schoolbooks and scientific articles) in this language.

Key-words : varieties, registers, code-switching, unitex, code-mixing, sociolinguistics, Lingála, Kinshasa, Congo.

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1. Introduction

Lingála is one of the national languages of Congo and it is spoken in the city of Kinshasa and Brazzaville. Kinshasa students speak Lingála in their daily life, but at school French is the language of instruction, even if the law provides for the use of both Congolese languages and French as languages of instruction. However, due to the poor command of French by students, in fact over 80 % of teachers in formal schools also use Lingála to explain lessons. Our work has already shown (Sene Mongaba 2011 b) that this is a case of diglossia where French is used as language of writing and Lingála as language of oral activities (explaining the lesson). On the other hand, in non formal schools, teachers generally use Lingála as the sole language of instruction.

We argue that the oral language production of teachers constitutes the initial point of departure in the preparation of lessons in Lingála. In this respect, it would then be possible and beneficial to create or reinforce scientific terminology and produce writing documents (schoolbooks and scientific articles) in this language.

In this paper, we will first describe the varieties of Lingála. Then, based on our corpus, we will characterise the Lingála variety used by teachers in the context of languages in contact (Lingála and French). We will then draw some conclusions.

2. Theoretical issue

This is a multidisciplinary work allying sociolinguistics and didactics. We investigated the variety of Lingála used in a teaching / learning context and the role of borrowing in the empowerment of Lingála as a language of instruction in contact with French, which is the traditional language of instruction.

3. Methodology

We spoke with 107 teachers from primary, secondary, university and non-formal schools. These investigations lasted nearly two years, 2009 to 2011. This preliminary investigation consisted in finding out if Lingála is used in the classroom (Sene Mongaba 2011 a & b). Among those teachers, some of them accepted that we record the interview or the lesson in the classroom. In this paper we analyse thirteen of the recordings, as shown in this table :

Activity	Numbers of recording	Matter
Interviews	5	Alphabetization (1), chemistry (1), sewing clothes (2), mechanic (1)
Lesson teaching	8	Alphabetization (1), chemistry (2), sewing clothes (3), mechanic (1), business management (1)

The recordings were then transcribed for analysis. We obtained a text file of 12708 words in OpenOffice recorded as Unicode format. We used the software Unitex to process the linguistic data of our corpus. This format allowed the processing of the file by Unitex 2.1. The file is opened in Unitex to evaluate frequency and concordance for our analysis.

We investigated the following parameters:

- What variety is used ? Is it the Makanza variety (use of the agreement and infixes rules) or Kinshasa variety (lacking these rules)?
- Among the French lexies that appear in the corpus, what can be considered as a borrowing?
- What about numbers, measures, colours and specialty terms?

4. Lingála varieties

Globally we can say that, currently, there are three varieties of Lingála : Lingála ya Makanza, Lingála ya Kinshasa and the so called "Lingála facile":

4.1 *Lingála ya Makanza*

Considered as the "pure" variety, Lingála ya Makanza uses the concordance system, infixes, vocalic harmony and a 7-vowels system (a, i, e, ε, o, ɔ, u) i.e. the contrast between the close-mid and open-mid vowels is distinctive (Motingea 2006; Meeuwis, 2010). But as Motingea explains, « [De Boeck] adopta le lingala pour ses écoles et l'œuvre missionnaire en général; mais il s'entreprit à le re-bantouiser, à le modeler à partir des parlers des alentours de la Station. C'est sous cette forme appelée classique que le lingala sera utilisé pendant longtemps dans les manuels scolaires et textes religieux [...] par la presse écrite [...] et par la presse parlée à Léopoldville (Kinshasa) et à Brazzaville » (Motingea 2010 : 1).

Example :

Na lingála facile, mayébi ma kemi pé maloba masúsu mazalí o monoko mwa lifalansé kasi loléngé loye masakólá matongámá matíkalí o lingála.

4.1.1 *Lingála ya Kinshasa*

The current Lingála, also known as Lingála ya Kinshasa, doesn't use all of these rules and has a 5-vowels system (a, e, i, o, u). French names of numbers, colours and units of sizes (in phonologically integrated form) are considered as Current Lingála lexical units.

Example:

Na lingála facile, mayébi ya kemi pé maloba misúsu ezalí na français kasi ndéngé masakólá etongámá, etíkalí na lingála.

4.1.2 *The so called "Lingála facile"*

Lingála facile¹ is the current Lingála, with some general lexical units in French. From the analysis of our corpus, we can say that people used, in a morphophonologic and morphosyntactic integrated form, some French general lexical units like *comprendre*, *expliquer*, *que*, *déjà*, *donc*, *est-ce que*,

¹ This term were popularised by the appearance on 2008 of a TV news program in Lingála created and produced by the Congolese Historian and journalist Zaccharie Babaswe. Its title is : Journal Télévisé en Lingála Facile.

Example:

Na lingála facile, banotion ya chimie pé maloba misúsu ezalí na français kasi ndéngé baphrase etongamá, etíkalí na lingála.

We will now describe the Lingála varieties produced by teachers in the city of Kinshasa.

5 Corpus analysis

5.1 The variety of Lingála used by teachers

The agreement rule can be used like this:

maboko mazolenga ngai

the lack of this rule will give :

maboko ezolenga ngai

the noun begin by “ma” and the verb begin also by “ma”

Oyebi te soki likambo lyango ekosimba to ekosimba te

the lack of this rule will give :

Oyebi te soki likambo yango ekosimba to ekosimba te

In Unitex (Paumier 2003 : 77), we used “lexical masks” <<^a>> to find all terms beginning with ‘a’ and <<^a>> <<^e>> to find all terms beginning with ‘a’ followed by another beginning with ‘e’. We proceeded by applying this filter in double angle brackets: lexical mask<<morphological pattern>> corresponding to the agreement structure of lingála. We obtained the results mentioned in the following table.

Variety	Noun class	Lexical mask	occurrences
agreement	mo	<<^mo>> <<^m>>	0
No agreement	mo	<<^mo>> <<^e>>	6
agreement	mi	<<^mi>> <<^m>>	0
No agreement	mi	<<^mi>> <<^e>>	1
agreement	lo	<<^lo>> <<^l>>	0
No agreement	lo	<<^lo>> <<^e>>	1
agreement	li	<<^li>> <<^l>>	0
No agreement	li	<<^li>> <<^e>>	4
agreement	ma	<<^ma>> <<^m>>	0
No agreement	ma	<<^ma>> <<^e>>	14
agreement	bi	<<^bi>> <<^b>>	0
No agreement	bi	<<^bi>> <<^e>>	4

We first had to apply our local pattern to extract occurrences. Then we verified mechanically if it really concerned a case of agreement and no agreement or if it was just an ambiguity. We didn’t record ambiguities but we only retained the score based on the presence of agreement or the lack of it. For example, with a pattern <<^li>> <<^l>>, we have 12 matches but 0 corresponding to the agreement rule.



The extraction with Unitex shows that the teachers in the city of Kinshasa never use the variety of Lingála with agreement of classes (Lingála ya Makanza). This is also the case with the rest of the population of the city. ‘Current Lingála’ is today considered as the elaborate variety but people generally speak Lingála Facile.

5.2 Numbers

Unitex generated the frequency of each token in the corpus. The analysis of these frequencies shows the amount of Lingála terms and French terms expressing numbers, as we can see in the following table :

Number	French	frequency	Lingála	frequency	TOTAL	French	Lingála
1	un	22	moko	95	117	19%	81%
2	deux	25	mibale	37	62	40%	60%
3	trois	22	misato	15	37	59%	41%
4	quatre	12	minei	1	13	92%	8%
5	cinq	16	mitano	2	18	89%	11%
6	six	16	motoba	1	17	94%	6%
7	sept	22	sambo	4	26	85%	15%
8	huit	19	mwambe	0	19	100%	0%
9	neuf	6	libwa	0	6	100%	0%
10	dix	22	zomi	5	27	81%	19%
20	vingt	9	tuku mibale	0	9	100%	0%
30	trente	4	tuku misato	1	5	80%	20%
100	cent	5	kama	0	5	100%	0%
1000	mille	6	nkoto	1	7	86%	14%

As we can see, for the numbers 1 and 2, teachers use Lingála terms more than French terms. The use of Lingála terms is still important for the number 3 (40%). Over the number 3, the use of French terms is very frequent.

5.3 Lexical units

We compared the frequency of some French terms with their equivalents in Lingála. To take into account all inflected forms, we use a local pattern of Unitex by applying “morphological filters <<morphological pattern>> <<ss>> to find all terms that contain ss. (Paumier 2003 : 77)

We observed the following lexies

French Terms	Lexical mask	Occurrences	Lingála Terms	Lexical mask	Occurrences
comprendre	<<compr>>	18	Koyoka*, koyeba tina	<<tina>>	0
expliquer	<<expli>>	22	kolimbola	<<limb>>	0
signifier	<<signif>>	3	Kolakisa**	<lakis>>	8

The terms *comprendre* (to understand) and *expliquer* (to explain) are only used in French although their Lingála equivalents *koyoka* / *koyéba tina* and *kolimbola* exist. This is a case of a borrowing replacing a pre-existent term. On the contrary, the term *signifier* (to mean) is used three times against 8 times for the Lingála equivalent *kolakisa*. To avoid ambiguities, we have to analyse concordance based on the term *koyoka* because in Lingála this term also means *to hear* or *to listen*. All of the occurrences in our corpus concerned these last meanings. The same goes for the term *kolakisa*, which can also mean to show, to teach and to indicate. In 41 occurrences in our corpus, we identified 8 occurrences meaning *signifier*.

5.4 Specialty terms

In the context of learning in formal and non formal schools, we observed that teachers use the so called Lingála facile. They also use specialty terms in French. However, teachers hope for the creation of scientific terminology in Lingála with the aim of using a "correct" Lingála when they want to teach in Lingála.

We illustrate our observation by this example in the sewing classroom.

Molakisi Bóyóka, bóyóka. Tozósála révision ndámbu. Tósála káka révision mwá muké, sóki tosílísí, toké na bisó na ba**coupe** na bisó. Tokoyékola káka petit matériel, Machine té. Balobí tósála nánú révision.

We are at the beginning of a lesson in a sewing classroom. The teacher informs that there will be a short revision before switching to practice. For specialty terms, she used French words as :

- *révision*
- *ba**coupe*** (plural of *coupe*) : morphologic integration
- *petit matériel*

Mk2 bapetit matériel.
Molakisi hein! Petit matériel elakísí níni?... premier point tozwákí petit matériel. B. petit matériel ezá níni?
Mk3 Ezá bisáleli ya miké.

The teacher asks the learner to explain what '*petit materiel*' is. The learner answers giving the equivalent name in Lingála. The learner then reformulates the term *petit materiel* in Lingála. This is an example of what we observed in our fieldwork: sometimes the appropriation of specialty terms in French spontaneously generates the equivalent term in Lingála, leading to terminological empowerment in Lingála.

Molakisi Bisáleli ya miké. Mami okokí koexpliquer ngái balobákí níni? Bisáleli ya miké yangó balobákí nánú níni?
Mami Esungaka bisó pó na misála ya miké miké.
Molakisi Tolobákí bóngó té. Balobákí bisáleli ya miké, premier point tolobakí tozalí na lieu du travail, sóki boraisonaka. Premier point tolobakí tozalí na lieu du

travail, lieu du travail elakísí esíká ya musálá.
 Esíká ya musálá esengéli ézala propre, ézala malámu,
 épésa esengo na batu óyo bazóyá kokomisa áwa. Tozwákí
 bóngó té?

As we see, the teacher doesn't stop the explanation with this equivalent answer but asks a comprehensive question to evaluate the knowledge of learners about '*bisaleli ya mike*' or '*petit materiel*'. We note again the recurrent habit of using a specialty term in French with its equivalent in Lingála during the explanation : 'Premier point tolobakí tozalí na *lieu du travail*, *lieu du travail* elakísí *esíká ya musálá*.'

We can then conclude that in the case of specialty terms, we can talk about code mixing, because teachers are aware that they are using a term in French. In this study we don't examine the case of code switching where teachers speak both French and Lingála.

5.5 Grammaticality

Molakisi	Nalobákí mètre ruban esungaka bísó pó na kozwa mesure sókí mutú alingí átonga elambá. Mulaí na yangó ezá cent cinquante centimètres . Ekabwání na níní na baníní? M.! Ekabwání na níní ?
Miryam	Na bacentimètre , bamillimètre .

The teacher and the learners use French terms of numbers and measures with a Lingála morphologic adaptation. '**Kozwa** mesure' (take the measure), **bacentimètre** (centimeters)

We also note that in this excerpt the French grammaticality of numerals is used. In Lingála the number comes after the noun : *bato míbale* (persons two). In French, like in English, the numeral precedes the noun : *deux personnes* (two persons). In Lingála, the teacher would say : *bacentimètre cent cinquante* (centimeters one hundred and fifty). According to our observations, generally speaking, both French grammaticality and Lingála grammaticality are alternatively used.

4. Conclusion

This work has endeavoured to describe the empowerment of Lingála in today's education in the city of Kinshasa. Besides the sociolinguistic aspect, we also sought to identify a terminological approach in the teachers' discourses. The French terms of numbers, colours and sizes constitute at present a case of borrowing integrated in the lexicon of Lingála speakers. The use of Lingála as a language of instruction allows a continued process of naming specialty terms in Lingála. This is far from being achieved, especially since the teachers were more interested in teaching approaches than in terminology. We also found that their pragmatic use of lingála as a language of instruction allowed better structuring of scientific discourses in Lingála. So for the future schoolbooks writers, taking into account these oral discourses of teachers would be helpful in writing schoolbooks in understandable language.

The fact that at the moment teachers use Lingála to explain lessons and the terminology work is not yet finished leads us to say that terminology is important but not a precondition to the use of African languages as languages of instruction.

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